

TESTIMONY FOR APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Good evening. My name is Cynthia Clair. I'm the executive director of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, a regional arts agency that serves 16 towns, over 120 cultural organizations and hundreds of individual artists. The New Haven region has abundant cultural resources, including a host of nationally recognized institutions. The arts are a source of great pride in our community and a cornerstone of Market New Haven's marketing strategy to attract visitors to our city. Numerous business leaders including the director of New Haven's Economic Development Corporation, have cited the vibrant arts and cultural scene as a benefit of doing business in our region and an asset in recruiting and retaining employees.

The arts reach people of all ages, in every community and income bracket. Last year, in Greater New Haven, over a million people experienced or participated in 1,740 performances, 2,465 classes and workshops, and 124 exhibits. Statewide, 22 million individuals participate in the arts each year.

In the Urban Institute's 2006 report "Cultural Vitality in Communities," the Greater New Haven and Hartford communities ranked among the top 10 metropolitan areas in the number of nonprofit arts organizations, community celebrations and festivals, and arts jobs. The Institute's report clearly points out that the arts contribute significantly to the rich quality of life we enjoy here in Connecticut, and to the state's economy.

The arts industry in Connecticut employs over 27,000 people. Connecticut ranks 4th in the 50 states in the percentage of artists in the workforce, according to a recent National Endowment for the Arts report. A 2006 Economic Impact Study conducted by the state's Commission on Culture and Tourism found that the arts generate over \$3.8 billion each year, including \$2.6 billion in personal income.

Funding for the arts and culture is not a handout; it's an investment. I recognize that you face a tremendously difficult challenge as you trim the state's spending for next year, and are considering ways to consolidate agencies to cut overhead. It is difficult for us to fully understand the ramifications of moving the Commission on Culture and Tourism into the Department of Economic and Community Development, as the governor has proposed. It is essential that the arts retain the visibility and autonomy within state government.

To sustain and grow a healthy arts industry, nonprofit cultural organizations in this state desperately need financial support. The state grants providing operational and program support for arts organization is essential to leveraging private dollars. For every dollar given to arts and cultural organizations, the private sector contributes \$11. As I urge you to preserve funding for the arts, I ask that you consider potential budget cuts carefully. In the last few months, several major cultural organizations have folded or filed for bankruptcy. The governor's proposed budget calls for eliminating line items for some of Connecticut's most important cultural institutions within two years. With corporate sponsorships and individual contributions being reduced in the current economic climate, such drastic line-item eliminations would totally destabilize, and potentially destroy, these vital cultural resources.

There is a reason that the arts played such a prominent role in the recent inauguration of President Barack Obama. As we listened to the poetry of Connecticut's own Elizabeth Alexander, and to performances by such musical luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman and Aretha Franklin, we were reminded that the arts commemorate and celebrate who we are as human beings. The arts matter. Thank you.

